

The leadership of change - a TAFE study

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TAFE NSW is currently experiencing a number of change aimed at meeting the requirements for a more flexible and responsive vocational education and training sector. These changes are occurring as the result of a government policy of economic rationalisation and the belief that competition in the sector will enhance the quality of training provided and better meet the needs of the customer.

Research in the vocational education and training sector is diverse. Current attention in TAFE is clearly focused on the introduction of new work practices aimed at ensuring TAFE can take its place in the restructured training and education environment.

But what of the leaders within TAFE who have to play a major role in the implementation of these changes? Contemporary management theory argues that a transformational style of leadership should be used in both private and public organisations to facilitate the progression of change and innovation.

This paper examines the paradox between the push towards a change-focused culture in TAFE that, theoretically, requires transformational leadership and the restrictions of a system that appears to hinder the use of this management style. It is part of a larger study (currently under review) that investigated the management styles of women managers within TAFE.

The paper presents the views of a number of managers interviewed for the larger study. It is a snapshot view of their feelings and perceptions which raises questions about the ability of TAFE personnel to implement changed work practices in an environment that does not appear to fully support its members in doing so.

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